

I. Shcherban, Master student
L. Pavlenko, PhD, Ass.Prof, research/language advisor
National University of "Kyiv – Mohyla Academy"

THE IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATION WITH THE V4 COUNTRIES

The changes that have recently taken place in Ukraine have kindled hopes for a new country and a new state to guarantee that rights of every Ukrainian, no matter from which walk of life, will be protected. Unfortunately, Russia, which had always intruded when the cause of liberty could gain the upper hand, has got entangled this time as well, retaliating by annexing Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and pulling the strings of "spontaneous" revolts in the East of Ukraine. Certainly, Ukraine has never been in such a desperate need of an ally as today; the Visegrad Group, Ukraine's neighbors, might fill the shoes. This is especially true if one takes into account the statement by Milos Zeman, the president of the Czech Republic, who said that Ukraine was among the three countries welcomed in the V4, right after Slovenia and Austria. As a matter of fact, Ukraine will be more successful in promoting its interests, should it side with the countries of the Visegrad Group.

The Visegrad Group, or the V4, is an alliance of four Central European states: Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, designed to facilitate cooperation in political, economic, and military spheres. In the sphere of politics, the reason for the Group's emerging was advancing the countries' European integration. Presently, all of the countries are the EU members, and have been since 2004. Energy issues are of primary importance to the four countries as long as economic cooperation is concerned. The V4 countries are working jointly on reducing their dependence on Russian gas. Additionally, they tend to be pro-nuclear energy lobbyists within the EU claiming that Europe should reconsider its nuclear energy policy. The V4 military cooperation began with the Visegrad Battlegroup initiative on the part of Poland offered in 2011. The group is expected to become operational in 2016, Steadfast Jazz NATO exercise having been a great contribution to shaping of liaisons between the countries' armed forces. Thus, the V4 stands for the Visegrad Group, a political, economic, and to some degree military organization.

Historical experience is the first point on the list of similarities between the countries. The first issue that all of them share is that their territories were incorporated by other kingdoms in the past. That could happen of their rulers' accord and peacefully, as it did in 1350's, when Rus' lands, which constitute today's Ukraine, were incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Incorporation was accompanied by no hostilities when Slovak lands became part of the Kingdom of Hungary in the 10th century; when King Sigismund of Hungary succeeded to the throne of the Kingdom of Bohemia (Czech lands) in 1419, or when Hungary itself was incorporated into the Habsburg monarchy (which would later be known as Austria) in 1526. It could also be accompanied with armed resistance, as it happened during the partitions of Poland on the part of Prussia, Russia and Austria in 1772, 1793 and 1795. Another issue that all the five countries have in common is belonging to the old Austrian Empire. Admittedly, it is not as vivid with Poland, for Austrian rule extended only to Krakow and Lublin and the adjoining territories. The same rule applies to Ukraine, only four big cities of which were part of Austria: Lviv

(Lemberg), Ivano-Frankivs'k (Stanislau), Ternopil (Tarnopol) and Chernivtsy (Czernovitz). However, one may still claim that all countries thus have a common past. It is twice as essential given the fact that all territories of an empire belong to one "imperial context" which provides "horizontal interactions between different elements" [2, p. 44–45]. The last mutual feature of the five countries is that they all later found themselves in the Soviet orbit. In the case of Ukraine that was in 1921, the country becoming one of the core elements of the USSR, while the other four were trapped in the Soviet "sphere of interest" right after WWII. Consequently, the histories of the V4 countries and Ukraine have so much in common that one would be justified in saying that they have similar historical experience.

Another issue that could serve as a rallying point for the countries is energy policy. First, all V4 countries and Ukraine are vulnerable to pressure on the part of Russia as long as they are dependent on gas import from that country. Not only is Central Europe dependent, but is also likely to find itself isolated, for Russia is has recently undertaken construction of a new gas pipeline, the Nord Stream, to transport the resource directly to Germany, giving the CE (Central Europe) countries a wide berth. Definitely, this will enable Russia to dictate whatever rules it deems necessary to the V4 countries; cutting off gas supply to the CE will no longer entail a stop in its transportation to Germany and France. As Edward Lucas, a pundit with a profound experience of work in the region pointed out, this is negotiating over the head of the Central Europe [6, p. 473]. Taking into account the latest events in Ukraine, the V4 cooperation might gain our country leverage in its struggle for less energy dependence; a collective policy of five countries is likely to make Russia think twice before exercising pressure. Besides, energy cooperation is already in progress: reverse gas flows from Slovakia and Hungary to Ukraine are already underway [3; 7], and "There's the will to do it of both governments, support (also financial) from the European Commission, and the immediate need" [1]. Second, the Visegrad Group countries and Ukraine possess a vested interest in diversification of natural gas import. Presently, one of the solutions is import of LNG (liquefied natural gas) from the United States. Ambassadors of the V4 countries have already addressed the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives to eliminate bureaucratic restrictions prohibiting export of American natural gas to non-FTA (free-trade agreement) countries [5]. As long as Ukraine is concerned, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives committees have included Ukraine on the list of prospective purchasers of the LNG, should the shipment begin (which cannot begin until 2016) [8]. Since the prospective gas delivery to Europe has already been subjected to criticism by some of American companies, Ukraine's siding with the V4 might improve the likelihood of a positive decision. Third, Ukraine's V4 integration will lead to technological advancement in the sphere of nuclear energy. The sphere has managed to survive and progress in the Central Europe, despite Berlin's and Vienna's pressure [9]. The Visegrad Group appears to be a perfect partner for Ukraine, which is not going to renounce its energy production. Likewise, Ukraine could contribute to technological development and imposing more severe safety measures on nuclear power plants. Hence, Ukraine's energy interests are in absolute accord with those of the V4, and thus could be a serious reason for advanced cooperation.

The last sphere that is certain to help the five countries find common ground is security policy. One argument to be employed to defend this assumption is that all the

relevant countries border each other. Ukraine, for instance, has common border with all countries save for the Czech Republic. Another point to be used in the reasoning is that according to the project of the Visegrad Battle Group drafted in 2007, Ukraine is supposed to be a participant. Moreover, the V4 signed a pact on a joint military body “in response to the escalating Ukrainian crisis” last year [4]. Given the fact that the negotiations on the pact have been stumbling for years, one might logically conclude that Ukraine’s security is considered crucial to that of the V4. The last argument to be used to buttress the claim of a mutually beneficial military cooperation is that of alignment. So far, Ukraine is the only country in the region, save for Moldova, positioned without any military block. Ukraine is neither a member of NATO, nor of the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization). Taking into account the fact Ukraine’s becoming a NATO member in the nearest future is extremely unlikely, being a part of the V4 will undoubtedly present its advantages. Consequently, Ukraine’s prospective military cooperation with the Visegrad Group is essential to maintaining security of Ukraine and Central Europe.

To conclude, one should state that Ukraine’s V4 cooperation is important, since it shares common past with the countries, has common vested energy interests, and has substantial prospects of military cooperation. While shared historical experience is by all means of great importance, common energy interests would usher Ukraine into an alliance that would provide Ukraine with an excellent bargaining position. Military cooperation is also of great essence, since the V4 membership is likely to work as a scarecrow against a potential aggressor, even though the chances of someone’s intervening on behalf of Ukraine will remain slim. Still, belonging to the V4 will undoubtedly enhance Ukraine’s international stand in relations with any other political body, be it single state or an alliance.

REFERENCES

1. Chłoń, Tomasz. Gas Reverse from Slovakia to Ukraine. *Visegrad Insight*. Visegrad Fund. Web. 7 Apr. 2014
2. Gerasimov, I., Glebov., S., Kaplunovski, A., Mogilner, M., Semyonov, A. “In Search of a New Imperial History.” *Ab Imperio* 1 (2005) : 33 – 56. Print
3. Groszkowski, Jakub, Sadecki, Andrzej. Slovakia and Hungary on Gas Supplies to Ukraine. *OSW*. Web. 8 Oct. 2014. Web. 12 Jan. 2015
4. Gulyas, Veronika. Visegrad Four Countries Sign Military Pact. *NASDAQ*. Dow Jones & Company, Inc. Web. 7 Apr. 2014
5. Lopatka, Jan. Central Europeans Want U.S. Gas To Cut Dependence on Russia. *Reuters*. Thomson Reuters. Web. 7 Apr. 2014
6. Lucas, Edward. *Nova Kholodna Viyna. Yak Kreml’ Zahrozhuye i Rosiyi I Zakhodu*. Kyiv: Tempora, 2009. Print/ Lucas, Edward. *The New Cold War*. Kyiv: Tempora, 2009. Print
7. Posaner, Joshua. Hungary Restarts Deliveries to Ukraine. *Interfax*. Natural Gas Daily.